

mobilise

Inquiry into Homelessness Policy in Australia

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Brought to you by Mobilise

ACNC registered Charity

For more information please contact: info@operationmobilise.com

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Introduction to Mobilise

Mobilise is a movement founded to build connections to change Australia. We are uniting a generation to develop practical solutions for those experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is an issue with significant societal focus. However, people are not sure how they can get involved.

That is where Mobilise comes in.

The initial Mobilise outreach operations found that people sleeping rough often didn't just need food and money. It was respect, dignity, and acknowledgement as a member of the society they live in. The recurring theme was isolation, as people walk past day after day, ignoring them.

For those struggling with homelessness, it is a case of “homeless, not helpless”. We have the opportunity to help restore the dignity of people who are sleeping rough in our cities. Together, we can remind people experiencing homelessness that people do care.

Over the past 5 years, Mobilise has become a leader in direct impact. We provide functional assistance and service referral to people experiencing homelessness across Australia.

As a movement, we have the opportunity to serve as a voice for the voiceless. It is up to us to work for a better future for those who need it most.

Overview of this paper (Executive Summary)

This inquiry is a tool and education resource for volunteers in homelessness. It aims to help understand the lay of the land of policy, politics, and advocacy in Australia. With this introduction, volunteers will be armed with the tools to make a difference.

Homelessness is a human rights issue. Access to safe and secure housing is one of the most basic human rights valued by all Australians. Further, homelessness overlaps with a lack of connectedness with family and the community. Recognising the impact of homelessness on basic rights has important implications for the way our society perceives people experiencing homelessness.

Mobilise advocates for a rights-based response to homelessness. This emphasises the need for involvement of people experiencing homelessness in developing solutions. Active and informed participation is likely to result in effective policy and funding. It will also improve the matching of specialist service delivery to demand and need. This will involve significant capital investment at a federal and state government level. A commitment to a rights-based approach will result in concrete action towards ending homelessness in Australia.

This inquiry comes at a critical time for people experiencing homelessness in Australia. Bushfires and COVID-19 have increased stress on renters and low income families. This is an accelerating issue, with an increase of 13.7% in people experiencing homelessness between 2011 and 2016. The current climate demands immediate and evidence-based intervention in legislation, policy, and budget.

The inquiry will provide a snapshot of homelessness in 2020. It will look at funding, interventions and programs using an evidence-based perspective. It is a one-stop shop for our volunteers to understand homelessness policy. This will empower people to get involved in government, and advocate for those whose voices are not being heard.

Goals

With our broader policy strategy, **Mobilise is calling for:**

1. Recognition of homelessness as a failure in the provision of human rights.
2. Delivery of integrated services that address the need for connection to self, family, community, and country.
3. The Federal and State Governments to deliver a sustainable supply of social and affordable rental housing.

This inquiry aims to achieve the following:

1. Educate and empower volunteers to engage in political discussions at all levels.
2. Identify and explain the complexity of homelessness policy in Australia.
3. Increase understanding of the social determinants of homelessness.
4. Improve participation and support in initiatives that prevent and respond to homelessness.
5. Build the capacity of the community to support people who are homeless.

A note on referencing

This inquiry provides a general overview of the issues discussed. Many sections will include only brief examination of data, statistics, and evidence. Should a more detailed examination of a topic be required, a link to associated literature will be provided. At the end of the document an index of useful sources and literature will also be provided.

A note on language

Stigma is one of the most critical issues in how we address homelessness. We believe that how we describe homelessness and people experiencing homelessness defines our perception.

Homelessness is not an inherent characteristic of people who experience it. As such, we prefer to refer to people as experiencing homelessness rather than being a homeless person.

Naming people as homeless is dehumanising and can take away their dignity and respect. This contradicts the values of our organisation, and we endeavor to define people experiencing homelessness as people first.

I. Homelessness reality in Australia

This section will explore homelessness in Australia through examination of ABS data and survey research. It will highlight key populations and ask why they are predisposed to homelessness and why homelessness has a significant impact in that population.

Under the ABS definition, a person is homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement is:

- In a dwelling that is inadequate
- Has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- Does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

Homelessness is a multi-faceted problem. Each person experiences a different mix of factors contributing to their homelessness. Related factors include domestic violence, mental illness, unemployment, and drug/alcohol abuse. Homelessness is the most potent example of disadvantage in our community. It is also one of the most important markers of social exclusion and isolation.

Homelessness includes severely overcrowded dwellings, supported accommodation, boarding houses, sleeping in other households and rough sleeping.

In 2016 the ABS released the following estimates of homelessness:

- Persons living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleepers) - 8,200
- Persons in supported accommodation for the homeless - 21,235
- Persons staying temporarily with other households - 17,725
- Persons living in boarding houses - 17,503
- Persons in other temporary lodgings - 678
- Persons living in severely crowded dwellings - 51,088
- All homeless persons - 116,427

As it stands, the provision of specialist homelessness services is outmatched by demand. Almost 300,000 people received support through SHS in 2018-19. Through this period, more than 90,000 requests for housing support remained unmet.

This equates to 253 unassisted requests each day. Waiting periods for social housing vary between 2 and 10 years depending on location.

Some groups are at a disproportionate risk of homelessness in Australia. Some key populations and associated risk factors are discussed below. These risk factors are not exhaustive, and are intended to provide an overview

Indigenous Australians

The impact of colonialism and dispossession has contributed to disproportionate levels of homelessness. Poor or inadequate housing, overcrowding and higher rates of unemployment also contribute. More than 23,000 (1 in 28) Indigenous Australians were homeless on Census night 2016. Yet, the housing situation of Indigenous Australians has improved - with rises in home ownership and private rentals. Continuation of this trend requires relationships with local communities and strong representation. These discussions will determine appropriate supports and interventions required by each community. This group will be discussed in detail in *Section V*.

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
A focus report on housing and homelessness*

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/indigenous-people-focus-housing-homelessness/contents/at-a-glance>

Young people

A stable and supportive home is critical for the development of young people. It allows engagement with society, access to education and employment and access to support services. When exposed to family breakdown young people are at risk of long-term unemployment and homelessness. 1 in 6 young Australians have experienced some form of homelessness. Young people that have experienced homelessness are much more likely to experience barriers. Reported barriers include education, employment and good mental health.

Mission Australia, Young People's Experiences of Homelessness: Findings from Youth Survey 2017
<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/780-young-people-s-experienceof-homelessness-findings-from-the-youth-survey-2017/file>

Women and children

Domestic and family violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. 1 in 3 clients presenting to specialist homelessness services reported violence as a major reason for presenting. Assistance for women affected by DFV must provide affordable, suitable, and stable accommodation. A lack of appropriate housing is likely to prevent people from leaving abusive relationships. Exposure to DFV has a negative impact on children's mental wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Mission Australia, Out of the Shadows –

Domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia, 2019

(www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/Out-of-theshadows)

People with mental illness

Nearly 1 in 3 who accessed specialist homelessness services in 2019 were experiencing mental health issues. People with mental illness are susceptible to homelessness. This is due to loss of family and social networks, access to employment and training and access to support services. The relationship of homelessness and mental health requires a comprehensive approach. This includes accommodation which integrates housing with ongoing mental health support.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Specialist Homelessness Services

Annual Report 2017-18 (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2017-18/contents/contents>)

People with disabilities

8.3% of specialist homelessness services clients have disability. This group is vulnerable due to the disability pay gap, medical costs, limited employment. People with disabilities also have limited employment opportunity and access to appropriate housing. Action has been taken to increase access to the private rental market through the Specialist Disability Accommodation program. Continued funding and support are required to limit the risk of homelessness in this group.

People with disability in Australia - Section 7 Housing-

(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/housing/homelessness-services>)

Immigrants and asylum seekers

Immigrants and refugees face adjustments to language, culture and education when migrating. This compounds disconnection from school, visa issues limiting employment and difficulty accessing welfare. 30% of people experiencing homelessness were born overseas. People who have recently migrated are at extreme risk of living in overcrowded or inadequate housing. Appropriate responses include specialist services who specialise in supporting people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2049.0

- Census of Population and Housing: Estimating homelessness, 2016

<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>

II. Impacts of homelessness on the community

Experiencing homelessness can have significant impacts at an individual level. People experiencing homelessness are vulnerable to long term unemployment, chronic ill health, and limited opportunity to access services. The loss of confidence, social exclusion and

Loneliness can also contribute to a significant sense of displacement that is difficult to quantify statistically.

For the community, homelessness is an economic problem. People without access to housing are significant consumers of public resources and generate expense for the community. The annual cost of homelessness has been estimated to exceed \$25,000 per person, while the cost of youth homelessness in Australia including additional health and criminal justice costs, has been calculated at \$626 million per year.

Cost-benefit analysis from the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute found that governments and society benefit more than they spend by providing last resort housing to homeless individuals. This is mainly through reduced healthcare costs, reduced crime, and helping people to get back into employment or education.

The Case for Investing in Last Resort Housing

(<https://sustainable.unimelb.edu.au/publications/issues-papers/last-resort-housing>)

III. Current Federal Government Approach to Homelessness

The following section will explore past and present national frameworks for addressing homelessness in Australia. This will provide a broad perspective to contextualise discussion of individual state responses in following sections.

The road home: a national approach to reducing homelessness

The Road Home set the strategic agenda for reducing homelessness in Australia by 2020, Its goals were to halve overall homelessness and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who needed it. According to the paper, future effort and investment should've occurred in three strategies of:

1. Turning Off the Tap: Services will intervene early to prevent homelessness.
2. Improving and expanding services which aim to end homelessness: Services will be more connected, integrated, and responsive to achieve sustainable housing, improve social and economic participation and end homelessness for their clients.
3. Breaking the Cycle: People who become homeless will move quickly through crisis system into stable housing with the support they need so that homelessness does not recur.

This was superseded by the national housing and homelessness agreement (NHHA).

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)

As of July 3rd, 2020, all states and territories have now provided their annual Statements of Assurance as required under the Australian Government's \$1.6 billion National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, giving the community an indication of how each jurisdiction is addressing homelessness.

The statements show states and territories spent \$5.5 billion on housing and homelessness in 2018–19, with \$1.2 billion spent on addressing homelessness and \$4.3 billion on improving social housing outcomes.

Under the NHHA, to receive federal funding state and territory governments will need to have publicly available housing and homelessness strategies and contribute to improved data collection and reporting (the majority of this being their duties to the SHSC).

The housing strategies must address the NHA housing priority policy areas relevant to that state or territory. The housing priority policy areas include:

- affordable housing
- social housing
- encouraging growth and supporting the viability of the community housing sector
- tenancy reform
- home ownership
- planning and zoning reform initiatives
- The key outcomes this agreement will contribute to include:
- a well-functioning social housing system that operates efficiently, sustainably and is effective in assisting low-income households and priority homeless cohorts to manage their needs
- affordable housing options for people on low-to-moderate incomes
- an effective homelessness system, which responds to and supports people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to achieve and maintain housing, and addresses the incidence and prevalence of homelessness
- improved housing outcomes for Indigenous Australians
- a well-functioning housing market that responds to local conditions
- Improved transparency and accountability in respect of housing and homelessness strategies, spending and outcomes.

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

(www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/housing_homelessness_agreement.aspx)

IV. Funding Models, Frameworks and Approaches by State

This section will examine homelessness in each state. Under the NHHA, homelessness is fundamentally a state issue. Individual states have responsibility for outlining how they plan to address homelessness and the delivery of specialist homelessness services.

The government strategy required by the NHHA, state referral service serving as first point-of-contact, and successful and progressive strategies currently being employed will be examined.

New South Wales (NSW)

Homelessness in New South Wales

NSW has a significant burden of homelessness with 37,715 people experiencing homelessness on census night in 2016. This is a 37% increase since 2011% and reflects the lack of affordable housing across Greater Sydney.

Further reading:

Homelessness in New South Wales: Key facts

([www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_nsw.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_nsw.pdf))

Government Strategy: NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

NSW has developed a comprehensive strategy in response to the significant increase in homelessness across the city. It recognises that homelessness is not just a housing problem, with a person's pathway to homelessness being driven by

- the intersection of structural drivers, (such as housing affordability, labour market forces)
- risk factors (such as financial stress, family breakdown)
- protective factors (such as employment, involvement in community).

The NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023 has three strategic priorities:

1. Intervening early and preventing crisis
2. Providing effective supports and responses
3. Creating an integrated, person-centred service system

NSW has set an ambitious target to halve rough sleeping by 2025, and this has been reflected in significant investment of \$1 billion in the 2019-20 budget towards a range of homelessness and social and affordable housing programs.

Further reading:

NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2023 information

(<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/homelessness>)

NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2023

(<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=590515>)

State referral service: Link2Home

Link2Home statewide telephone service providing information, assessment and referral to specialist homelessness services, temporary accommodation and other appropriate services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Link2home also provides information about homelessness services across New South Wales for specialist homelessness service providers and homelessness advocates acting on behalf of clients.

Further reading:

Link2Home information on NSW Government website

(<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/housing/help/ways/are-you-homeless>)

What's working? No Exits from Government Services into Homelessness

No Exits from Government Services into Homelessness is a framework for multi-agency action that emphasises the need for accountability across government agencies that, so no one exists state care into homelessness.

Many highly vulnerable people leaving government services have multiple and complex needs or experience unpredictable exit pathways that significantly increase their risk of homelessness. **These at-risk groups include:**

- Young people leaving statutory care
- Young people released from youth justice centres
- People released from adult correctional facilities
- Vulnerable people transitioning from health facilities/settings

- People leaving social housing following a failed tenancy.

This is a new program, and the effectiveness remains to be examined as it is rolled out. However, it is a significant step in the right direction in ensuring these people are afforded the same support and opportunities as the general population.

Further reading:

Homelessness partnerships and agreements, NSW Government website a (<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/funded/programs/homelessness/specialist-services/partnerships>)

No Exits from Government Services into Homelessness: A Framework for Multi-Agency Action (www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/homelessness/prevention-and-early-intervention/no-exits-from-government-services-into-homelessness-a-framework-for-multi-agency-action)

Queensland

Homelessness in Queensland

There were 21,670 people experiencing homelessness on census night in 2016. One in 116 people in Queensland (Qld) received homelessness assistance, lower than the national rate (1 in 86). The top 3 reasons for clients seeking assistance were financial difficulties (47%, compared with 41% nationally), housing crisis (41%, compared with 37%), housing affordability stress (35%, compared with 28%).

Further reading:

Homelessness in Queensland: Key facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_qld.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_qld.pdf))

Government Strategy: Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027

The Queensland Housing Strategy is a 10-year framework designed to address areas of need across housing, homelessness, and job growth. Its vision is for every Queenslander to have access to safe, secure and affordable housing that allows them to participate in social and economic life.

The 2017-2020 Action Plan provides more information on deliverables and strategies, but the broader plan is built around transformational development and opportunities for people and communities and providing a safety net for those most in need.

Key strategies include:

1. Homelessness: Improve the pathways from homelessness to safe and secure housing.
2. Social housing: Make better use of housing assets to meet the needs of communities.
3. Affordable rental: Increase the supply of community managed affordable rental accommodation.
4. Private market rental: Increase the supply of affordable private market rental properties and provide greater protection and support to tenants.
5. Home ownership: Create a pipeline of development; undertake urban renewal across local precincts; and encourage energy-efficient and sustainable design.

Further reading:

Queensland Housing Strategy

(<https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/about/strategy/housing>)

Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2020 Action Plan

(www.hpw.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/8186/qldhousingstrategyactionplan.pdf)

Queensland Housing Strategy 2017-2027 Progress Report 2017-2019

(https://www.hpw.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/11472/qldhousing-strategy-progress-report.pdf)

State referral service: Homeless Hotline

The Queensland Government's Homeless Hotline is a phone information and referral service for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.

Homeless Hotline provides information on:

- Support
- Accommodation
- Meals
- Showers
- Referral to specialist services

What's working? Youth Housing and Reintegration Service (YHARS)

Youth Housing and Reintegration Services (YHARS) help young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They provide support, financial help, and access to different accommodation options.

YHARS is made up of 2 services:

1. YHARS Support: provided in 6 locations (Hervey Bay/Maryborough, Ellen Grove (Brisbane), Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, and Townsville)
2. After Care Service: available statewide.

YHARS is a comprehensive service that assigns a caseworker to help people experiencing homelessness to:

- apply for and access accommodation
- contact your family or carers (if that is appropriate)
- find education, training, and job opportunities
- develop skills and knowledge to help you stay in a place and to live by yourself
- link with support, specialist services and longer-term accommodation services
- access financial help to pay for goods or services that are related to the above.

Further reading:

YHARS on Queensland Government website:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/youth/family-social-support/housing-accommodation/yhars-youth-housing>

Victoria

Homelessness in Victoria

Victoria has a homelessness and housing affordability crisis. The State spends the lowest (\$92.02) per capita annually on social housing compared to the rest of Australia's states and territories. As of September 30, 2020, there were 48,529 households (equating to over 100,000 Victorians) on the waiting list for social housing. The regions of East and South-East Melbourne account for 32% of Victorians experiencing homelessness and 40% of those that are waiting for social housing.

Further reading:

Homelessness in Victoria: Key facts

[http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_vic.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_vic.pdf)

Government Strategy: A Better Place – A 10-year plan

The release of A Better Place: Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy marked the beginning of a new era for Victorians experiencing homelessness. When the plan was released, the State's homeless population was projected to rise above 24,000 by 2020. The Victorian Government acted in an attempt to reverse the alarming projection.

The Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy aims to:

- Prevent people becoming homeless in the first place
- Minimise the harm caused by homelessness, and
- Assist people to move out of homelessness permanently

The Victorian Government's new approach comprises four areas of reform:

1. Prioritising early intervention and prevention
2. Taking a life stage approach to delivering services, recognising people at different stages of life often become homeless for different reasons, face different circumstances and have different needs.
3. Taking a systemic, whole-of-government approach to addressing the causes and effects of homelessness for people at different life stages.
4. Developing a workforce capable of early intervention and suitable for people at different life stages. work will be across service sectors to address the multiple needs of people experiencing homelessness and focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for their clients.

Further reading:

A Better Place Victorian Homelessness 2020 Strategy

http://www.nwhn.net.au/admin/file/content101/c6/A-Better-Place-Victorian-Homelessness-2020-Strategy_1285220695133.pdf

State referral service: Launch Housing

Launch Housing comprises over 400 staff across 14 Victorian locations, contributing passion and expertise towards providing supported pathways out of homelessness. They offer individuals emergency shelter, crisis accommodation, specialist supports, and rough sleeping services so those that are at risk are able to secure a safe home.

Further reading:

Launch Housing Explainer (<https://www.launchhousing.org.au/explainer-the-homelessness-services-system-and-demand-for-services>)

What's working? The Victorian Council Charter

Rather than waiting for the State or Federal Government to take the lead, 13 local councils across Melbourne's east and south east demonstrated a proactive approach to collaborate and commit to a unified 'housing first' approach to meet the needs of communities' most vulnerable members. The response is off the back of research into the most powerful way local councils can contribute to the eradication of homelessness. To guide their campaign, the alliance of councils has adopted [*The Regional Local Government Homelessness & Social Housing Charter 2020*](#).

The Charter prioritises three key themes to reduce homelessness:

1. Work in partnership with Federal and State Government, public and private sector partners to increase the supply of social housing and respond to homelessness in south and east Melbourne.
2. Scope land within our region with the potential to be re-purposed for the development of social housing.
3. Advocate for inclusive housing growth, including through mandatory inclusionary zoning.

Though a project still in its nascency, the alliance of councils has taken homelessness into their own hands. By conducting independent research, they are best suited to understand and respond efficiently and effectively to homelessness within their respective jurisdictions.

Further reading:

Regional Local Government Homelessness and Social Housing Group Charter

<https://www.monash.vic.gov.au/Services/Health-Safety/13-Councils-2million-plus-residents-a-unified-voice-to-tackle-homelessness>

South Australia (SA)

Homelessness in South Australia

As per the 2016 Census, there were 5,985 people in South Australia experiencing homelessness. In 2018 it was estimated that 15% of those experiencing homelessness in South Australia were of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, while 45% were born overseas. The government has sought to reform homelessness in the state, establishing a sector representative group of SHS representatives in April 2020.

Further reading:

Homelessness in SA: Key Facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_SA.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_SA.pdf))

Government Strategy: Our Housing Future Strategy 2020-30

Acknowledging that housing is a fundamental pillar of society, Premier Steven Marshall announced that the South Australian Government have committed to getting housing and homelessness 'back on track. Utilising a people-first approach, the State Government has outlined five core goals to meet within the broader housing strategy:

1. Create conditions for a well-functioning housing market that meets the housing needs of all South Australians
2. Reduce housing stress through 20,000 affordable housing solutions
3. Create housing pathways to enable people to access housing and services as their needs change
4. Prevent and reduce homelessness through targeted and tailored responses
5. Modernise the social housing system and reposition it for success

The SA Government will look to build on the 44,000 social housing properties available across the state, pledging 20,000 affordable housing solutions by 2030. The Strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis, with key partners and stakeholders throughout the housing ecosystem comprising the monitoring group.

Further reading:

Our Housing Future 2020-2030

(https://www.housing.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/130692/Our-Housing-Future-2020-2030.pdf)

State referral service: Homeless Connect SA

Homeless Connect SA is a 24/7 telephone service that supports anyone experiencing homelessness state-wide in South Australia. A free call to 1800 003 308 will provide you with assistance for individual needs and direct referrals to over 90 services. Homeless Connect SA offers support in the following ways:

- Connect you with relevant services and information to help in your current situation
- Short-term assistance until you can be connected to a specialist homelessness service
- Referrals to specialist services including Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence services, youth services and mental health support

The integration of the hotline was part of reforms to simplify accessibility to crisis and prevention services. An easier system to navigate is expected to help achieve real, long-term outcomes.

Further reading:

Homeless Connect SA

(<https://www.syc.net.au/new-homeless-connect-sa-service/>)

What's working? Adelaide Zero Project

The Adelaide Zero Project is the culmination of the collaborative approach of over 40 not-for-profits, government agencies, private organisations and service providers to lead Adelaide to functional zero homelessness. Pioneered by Community Solutions in North America, the Adelaide Zero Project set themselves the task back in 2018 of achieving Functional Zero homelessness in Adelaide's CBD by 2020.

The Implementation Action Plan included:

- Hutt Street Centre to run a 'Connections Week' to gain confirmation on the names of each person sleeping rough on any given night in Adelaide's CBD.
- Neami National to establish and maintain a 'by name list' of every person sleeping rough throughout the year.
- The development of an online dashboard to track to quantify those sleeping rough and those moved to secure housing.
- Anglicare SA to create an Aligned Housing Plan, ensuring housing is prioritised for people on the 'by name list'.
- City of Adelaide to form a Business Alliance to End Homelessness.

With an average of 33 people entering rough sleeping each month in the city of Adelaide, the project led by the Don Dunstan Foundation is housing more people monthly than is transitioning into rough sleeping. With the momentum of housing upwards of 70 people a month, the current 117 rough sleepers have cause to be optimistic.

Further reading:

Adelaide Zero Project

(<https://www.dunstan.org.au/adelaide-zero-project/background/>)

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Homelessness in the Australia Capital Territory

Figures between 2011 and 2016 indicate that the ACT has a sustained, entrenched problem that is getting worse. There has been a decrease in the overall number of homeless people, but an increase in the number of people sleeping rough. At last census there was 1596 people homeless in the ACT, with 1 in 5 between 25-34. Just under 50% of these were in supported accommodation, with 3.4% sleeping rough.

Further reading:

Homelessness in the Australian Capital Territory: Key facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_act.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_act.pdf))

Government Strategy: ACT Housing Strategy 2018

In October 2018, the ACT released the ACT Housing Strategy which roadmaps a ten-year vision for housing in the ACT. Under the NHHA, the ACT will receive around \$131 million in Australian Government funding over five years. The goals of the ACT Housing Strategy are as follows:

1. An equitable, diverse, and sustainable supply of housing for the ACT community
2. Reducing homelessness
3. Strengthening social housing assistance
4. Increasing affordable rental housing
5. Increased affordable home ownership

Further reading:

ACT Housing Strategy 2018 (www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1265638/ACT-Housing-Strategy-2018.pdf)

ACT Housing Strategy Implementation Plan (2018)

(https://www.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1265640/ACT-Housing-Strategy-2018-Implementation-Plan.pdf)

State referral service: OneLink

OneLink is the central information/access point for human services for the ACT including homelessness, disability, and family support services. OneLink replaced First point and

the Child Youth and Family Gateway on 1 July 2016 and is operated by Woden Community Service.

People who are homeless or who require information or access to human services can call 1800 176 468 free of charge. People are also welcome to drop in and meet with OneLink staff, located at Housing ACT, corner of Emu Bank and Benjamin Way Belconnen.

Services connected include short term emergency accommodation, transitional accommodation, housing support, youth and family support and a range of other support services.

Quarterly reporting provides clear and transparent information about the engagement of people in the ACT with specialist homelessness services

Further reading:

OneLink website

[\(https://www.onelink.org.au/\)](https://www.onelink.org.au/)

What's working? Common Ground Canberra

Common Ground Canberra opened in July 2015 and is a 40 unit apartment complex which provides high quality, safe, secure accommodation with support services on site that are critical to helping break the cycle of homelessness. 20 units are home to people who have experienced homelessness, and 20 units are dedicated to affordable renters.

CGC strives to create a strong, vibrant community through a commitment to social inclusion that is provided in a safe and supportive, diverse, harmonious, and inclusive community. It has been established through government, community and private sector working together to provide for the most disadvantaged in Canberra.

The most recent ACT budget has allocated funding for the establishment of a further 40 units in Dickson under the common ground model.

Further reading:

Common Ground Canberra website

[\(https://www.commongroundcanberra.org.au/\)](https://www.commongroundcanberra.org.au/)

Common Ground Canberra information of ACT Government website

[\(https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/hcs/services/social_housing/social_housing_and_homelessness_services/common-ground-canberra\)](https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/hcs/services/social_housing/social_housing_and_homelessness_services/common-ground-canberra)

Tasmania

Homelessness in Tasmania

In 2016 there were 1622 people homeless in Tasmania, with a further 943 at risk. This is concentrated in and around Hobart, with 57% in greater Hobart and the south east. Many people experiencing homelessness on census night were living in supported accommodation (35%) or staying temporarily in other households (30%) on census night, while 8% were sleeping rough.

Further reading:

Homelessness in Tasmania: Key facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_tas.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_tas.pdf))

Government Strategy: Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025

The Tasmanian Affordable Housing Strategy is driven by three key strategic interventions, including:

1. Preventing housing stress of low-income earners by increasing the supply of affordable homes.
2. Targeted Early Intervention to assist Tasmanians in need who are at risk of housing stress or homelessness.
3. Rapid Response and Recovery aimed at people who are at immediate risk or experiencing homelessness to find safe and secure housing

With the release of Action Plan 2019-2023, the Tasmanian Government doubled down on its primary commitment to increase the supply of social housing and supported accommodation. This second stage of the strategy has a commitment of an additional \$125 million over five years.

Further reading:

Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy 2015-2025, Action Plan 2015-2019, and Action Plan 2019-2023

(https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/tasmanian_affordable_housing_strategy)

State referral service: Housing Connect

Housing Connect is a one-stop shop for housing and airport run by the Tasmanian government. With one assessment people experiencing homelessness can apply for everything from emergency accommodation to a long-term home.

Front Door services are delivered by Colony 47 and Anglicare and provide a first point of contact for Tasmanians requiring housing and housing related support. These services are in place to help direct people to the service they need, and do not directly house people.

Further reading:

The Housing Connect System information on Tasmanian Government website

(<https://www.communities.tas.gov.au/housing/housing-connect/the-housing-connect-system-fact-sheet>)

What's working? Safe Space Program

The Safe Space program is a 24-hour service for people who are experiencing homelessness in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. It is a place to shelter, rest and connect to support such as mental health services, drug and alcohol services, doctors and more permanent housing solutions.

The Safe Space was developed in consultation with people in the community experiencing homelessness and has recently received significant support from the Tasmanian government, with \$16.8 million in funding delivered in the latest budget.

Safe Space is now a 24hr service that has the capacity to expand and add further specialist services as the need becomes apparent. This has been made possible through strong community consultation and strong action by the state government in response to increasing rental stress across the state.

Further reading:

Hobart Safe Space

(<https://hobartcitymission.org.au/safe-space/>)

Launceston Safe Space (www.citymission.org.au/find-a-service/crisis-accommodation/safe-space-launceston)

Western Australia (WA)

Homelessness in Western Australia

On any given night in Western Australia, around 9,000 people can be considered to be homeless. More are homeless and not counted as such. Over a year, WA's specialist homelessness services are assisting over 24,000 people with significant over-representation of Aboriginal people (41%). 67 requests for specialist homelessness agencies were unmet every day at last count.

Further reading:

Homelessness in Western Australia: Key facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_wa.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_wa.pdf))

Government Strategy: All Path's Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030

WA has made a 10-year commitment to address homelessness following an 18 month community campaign bringing together contributions of many people from homelessness services, those experiencing homelessness, funders of services and members of the community.

The WA strategy has five core strategic areas across

1. Housing - ensure adequate and affordable housing
2. Prevention - focus on prevention and early intervention
3. Strong and Coordinated Approach - no 'wrong-door system'
4. Data, Research and Targets - improve data and research, and set clear targets
5. Build Community Capacity - never about us, without us

This strategy emphasises the Housing First approach, with the priority being to quickly move people experiencing homelessness into appropriate housing. This approach advocates that people experiencing homelessness are better able to access support and achieve long-term positive outcomes from the stability of a home.

Further reading:

The Western Australian Strategy to End Homelessness 2018-2028

(<https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2018-04/apo-nid268771.pdf>)

WA Alliance to End Homelessness

(<https://www.endhomelessnesswa.com/>)

State referral service: Entrypoint Perth

Entrypoint Perth is a free assessment and referral service assisting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Western Australia to access accommodation and support options.

Entrypoint Perth is a service provided by Centrecare Incorporated and is the first point of contact for families and individuals who require access to Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) and other accommodation and/or support services in the Perth metropolitan area. Due to an amalgamation with the Housing Authority Homeless Advisory Service, Entrypoint Perth will now also provides information on accommodation and support options to assist people in regional Western Australia to seek their own accommodation.

Further reading:

Entrypoint Perth

(<http://www.entrpointperth.com.au/>)

What's working? 50 Lives 50 Homes

The 50 Lives 50 Homes Project is a targeted campaign to collaboratively address the ongoing challenges of housing and supporting homeless people in Perth. Ruah is the lead agency of the '50 Lives 50 Homes' campaign, working with organisations across multiple sectors to collaboratively address the ongoing challenges of housing Perth's most vulnerable rough sleeping homeless population.

As of September 3 2020, the 50 Lives 50 Homes campaign has housed 279 people in 241 homes with a retention rate of 81%.

Further reading:

50 Lives 50 Homes Perth Facebook page

(<https://www.facebook.com/ZeroProject>)

50 Lives 50 Homes third evaluation (<https://www.flipsnack.com/ruahcs/50-lives-50-homes-third-evaluation-report/full-view.html?fbclid=IwAR19iy09fj0-JlPrj4BqidOrzGhkfNvGK397-DDKsLSzGYjVluIMjrNG904>)

Northern Territory (NT)

Homelessness in the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory is in a severe state of housing crisis. NT has the highest rate of homelessness in the nation with nearly 600 people per 10,000 homeless, equating to 6% of the population. This is 12x the national average, and reflects the complex demographic and geographic features unique to the NT. As it stands, 48.4% of demand for specialist homelessness services is unmet.

Further reading:

Homelessness in the Northern Territory: Key facts

([http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/\\$file/Homelessness_nt.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/templates/resources/$file/Homelessness_nt.pdf))

Government Strategy: NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023

The NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-23 aims to strengthen the foundations of the service system to deliver improved housing and support outcomes for Territorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The Action plan 2018-2023 aims to build the foundations to reform the system of housing in the NT by

1. Strengthen interagency responses and support to reduce exits into homelessness from out-of-home care, health services and correctional settings
2. Streamline and strengthen preventative support to people at risk of homelessness
3. Improve Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development policy and practice to better respond to homelessness and the risk of homelessness
4. Increase access to and supply of private rental, affordable and social housing
5. Work with the specialist homelessness services sector to strengthen service responses for people who are homeless and at risk of homelessness.

Further reading:

The NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-23

(https://dlghcd.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/690474/nt-homeless-strategy.pdf)

State referral service: ShelterMe

ShelterMe provides information to those seeking accommodation and support services and assists the sector as a referral tool. Shelter Me contains up to date information about

accommodation and services throughout the NT, including crisis, transitional, short term, low cost, and supported accommodation, and other support services.

ShelterMe is managed by NT Shelter and funded by the Northern Territory Government. NT Shelter is the peak non-government housing and homelessness advocacy body in the Northern Territory. NT Shelter advocates for appropriate and affordable housing for ALL Territorians particularly disadvantaged groups and those on low incomes.

Further reading:

ShelterMe Directory

(<https://www.shelterme.org.au/>)

What's working? Housing and Support Initiative (HASI)

The NT Housing Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) provides support to people with a mental illness who currently live in Department of Housing and Community Development accommodation. HASI assists participants to maintain their tenancy and also provides psychosocial support to help participants develop life skills that will improve their quality of life. Referrals are through the Top End Mental Health Service (TEMHS) or the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Under the HASI, people receive tailored support that focuses not only on their clinical needs, but also their psychosocial and housing support needs. The learnings from the current HASI program trial operating in Darwin will inform the potential expansion of programs and supports for people with mental health issues who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in other parts of the NT.

Further reading:

Northern Territory Housing Accommodation Support Initiative (NT HASI)

(<https://health.nt.gov.au/working-with-nt-health/nt-health-grants/northern-territory-housing-accommodation-support-initiative-nt-hasi#:~:text=The%20Northern%20Territory%20Housing%20Accommodation,illness%2C%20with%20the%20aim%20of>)

V. What's not working

The following section will examine four key areas in which homelessness action has been deficient in recent times. These factors are varied and related, and so not represent an exhaustive list of challenges faced by the federal and state governments in addressing homelessness.

a. Lack of investment in social housing

On any given night, just over 4% of households rent social housing and it is estimated 10% of Australians have utilised social housing in the past 20 years. Australians who use social housing represent a diverse and dynamic group, with people using social housing as a long-term home, a springboard to private housing, a haven after homelessness or a reprieve from domestic violence. Clearly, social housing plays a significant role in providing stability and housing among some of the most vulnerable in our community, including recently homeless people, older women, mothers and children and refugees and immigrants.

Findings from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) suggest that Australia will need another 730,000 social housing dwellings in 2040 if the rise in homelessness and housing stress among low-income renters is to be addressed.

Rental stress in Australia

- 116,000 people were homeless in 2016, living in improvised and severely overcrowded homes
- 315,000 households rely on very low incomes, paying more than 30% of income on rent (defined as housing stress)
- To address homelessness and housing stress today an additional 430,000 social housing dwellings would be required

The varied benefits of social housing can be hard to quantify. AHURI argues that the way cost-benefit analysis is conducted must be changed so that the social benefits of social housing are properly quantified. Evidence from Infrastructure Victoria failed to find evidence of improvements to employment, education, incarceration and health outcomes (predominantly due to social housing being targeted at society's most vulnerable). Alongside investment, further investigation and research will be imperative in ensuring

governments make the right investment decisions and allocate resources more efficiently while keeping equity concerns top of mind.

As of December 2020, some significant steps have been taken to increase the social housing stock in Australia. This is the result of rising calls from housing advocates, industry groups, academics, and social service providers under the banner of the Social Housing Acceleration and Renovation Program (SHARP).

Victoria's \$5.4 billion Big Housing Build

- Aims to create over 12,000 homes in four years
- Of these, 9,300 will be social housing, the rest will be affordable or market rate housing
- The program will replace 1,100 old public housing units

Further reading:

Social housing exit points, outcomes and future pathways: an administrative data analysis
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/326>)

Social housing as infrastructure: rationale, prioritisation and investment pathway
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/315>)

Big Housing Build
(<https://www.vic.gov.au/homes-victoria-delivering>)

b. Rise of homelessness in capital cities

Homelessness has increased greatly in Australian capital cities since 2001. Almost two-thirds of people experiencing homelessness are in these cities, with much of the growth associated with severely crowded dwellings and rough sleeping.

The numbers of households living in severely crowded dwellings in capital cities have doubled in 15 years, accounting for much of the growth in homelessness overall. In 2001, this group accounted for 35% of people experiencing homelessness, with 27% living in cities. By 2016, severe crowding rates had soared to 44% of all people experiencing homelessness, with 60% living in capital cities.

AHURI found that homelessness in these areas has risen disproportionately due to a shortage of affordable private rental housing and higher median rents. In capital cities with a shortage of affordable private rental housing, severe overcrowding grew by 290.5% against a total homelessness growth of 32.6%.

Currently, this is a substantial mismatch between the distribution of homelessness and specialist homelessness service capacity. In major capital cities, most SHS capacity is located in and around inner capital city areas but homelessness rates, particularly overcrowding, are increasing within urbanised locations.

A continued and expanded affordable housing supply-side response is critical to making inroads into preventing and resolving homelessness. Current service agreements emphasising commitments to housing supply need to consider the location and key priority areas for new housing development as well as review the amounts of rents that are sustainable in the long term.

Further reading:

The changing geography of homelessness: a spatial analysis from 2001 to 2016
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/313>)

c. Indigenous homelessness

Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have experienced much higher rates of homelessness and have been overrepresented among clients seeking homelessness and social housing services than non-Indigenous Australians. These higher rates of unstable housing relate to complex and interrelated factors including the lasting impacts of colonisation on Indigenous Australians, exposure to family violence, substance disorders, unemployment, low education levels and poor health—which are both contributors to, and outcomes of, insecure housing circumstances

One in 28 Indigenous people (23,000) were homeless on Census night in 2016 - representing more than 1 in 5 (22%) homeless Australians. More than half of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness lived in Very remote areas. The 2016 Indigenous homelessness rate is 10 times that of non-Indigenous Australians. The differences in the rates of homelessness for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians were higher in Remote and Very remote areas than in Major cities.

State and commonwealth proposals to build new housing for indigenous families in remote regions should consider the style and design of housing that will best support those families. This requires an understanding of cultural norms and practices of the affected households. AHURI research found that government funded social housing providers typically consider the appropriateness of their social housing in terms of what is required and preferred for a non-Indigenous nuclear family, and that ‘...standardised planning and housing is not necessarily suitable or appropriate for the diverse cultural, gender, age, and extended family structures evident in Aboriginal communities’.

However, research shows that a ‘one size fits all’ approach ‘is one of the principle factors in the ongoing failure of governments and agencies in the provision of appropriate housing for Indigenous Australians’.

Indigenous cultural customs that can affect housing needs include:

- changing household numbers in relation to extended family transitions between houses and communities often result in overcrowding
- proximity of houses or the lack of traditional separation can lead to aggravations between family, language, age and/or gender groups
- avoidance behaviours related to kinship rules
- different values and attitudes about the possession and sharing of objects
- cultural responses to the death of a householder

Further reading:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness
(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/indigenous-people-focus-housing-homelessness/contents/at-a-glance>)

Housing and Indigenous disability: lived experiences of housing and community infrastructure
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/283>)

Why are special services needed to address Indigenous homelessness?
(<https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2012-06/apo-nid30562.pdf>)

Best practice models for effective consultation towards improving built environment outcomes for remote Indigenous communities
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/76>)

d. Significant burden of domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children, reporting in 1 in 3 clients attending specialist homelessness services (SHS). More than 121,000 people experiencing domestic violence sought help from SHS in 2017-18. Domestic violence continues to affect a large number of Australians and is an issue with significant government and societal focus.

There are also different risks and experiences for different groups of people that experience domestic and family violence that require tailored policy responses. This includes children, young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTI, and culturally and linguistically diverse women.

The relationship between DFV and homelessness is well recognised, with responses ranging from traditional interventions like women's refuges through to 'safe at home' programs, which promote women's right to live in their own homes without violence. For women and their children escaping domestic and family violence, access to housing that is secure, affordable, and immediately available is the most critical factor in their support pathway.

Research suggests that the safety and wellbeing of women and children who are victims of violence improves when services and support are integrated and linked to long-term housing stability. Currently, women leaving violence move through a diverse range of housing pathways, and despite the importance of safe, stable housing, housing assistance is not always available and there are many structural impediments to affordability, security, and stability in any kind of tenure.

Further reading:

Housing outcomes after domestic and family violence

(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/311>)

Out of the shadows: Domestic and family violence, a leading cause of homelessness in Australia

(<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/position-statements/out-of-the-shadows/911-out-of-the-shadows-domestic-and-family-violence-a-leading-cause-of-homelessness-in-australia>)

VI. Areas of opportunity - An international perspective

There have been several examples of ground-breaking and successful programs to change the face of homelessness overseas. Explored below are some notable interventions from nations similar to Australia that hold lessons on how we as a nation can address homelessness.

a. Housing First (Europe)

'Housing First Europe' was a social experimentation project run between August 2011 and July 2013 involving ten cities throughout Europe. The project strived to obtain homelessness solutions through two main areas: (1) research and evaluation, and (2) identifying and exchanging mutual learnings.

The five evaluated test sites were:

1. Amsterdam
2. Budapest
3. Copenhagen
4. Glasgow
5. Lisbon

The five peer sites for information exchange were:

1. Dublin
2. Gent
3. Gothenburg
4. Helsinki
5. Vienna

The project differed from many traditional approaches that seek to address the complex needs of individuals before assisting them into housing. Housing First approaches endeavor to move people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing as quickly as possible. Specialist support services are then available to assist

in a flexible and individualised manner to those in housing, but on a voluntary basis in consideration with self-determination. Research has suggested that with the basic need of housing accounted for, individuals are able to focus on attaining positive outcomes more effectively in other areas of their lives.

Results

Four of the five cities demonstrated that the project can be incredibly successful in ending homelessness, inclusive of those with severe support needs. It showed that the project was effective in permanently tenanting a broad target group, with the assistance of adequate support services along the way. While housing retention rates displayed impressive numbers, housing people experiencing homelessness presented additional unforeseen challenges. For example, newly housed people with a fixed address were now experiencing creditors from the past seeking collection for large debts owed.

Table 7: Housing retention rates in Housing First Europe test sites

	Ams-terdam	Copen-hagen	Glas-gow	Lisbon	Buda-pest
Total number of service users housed	165	80	16	74	90
Unclear cases (death, left to more institutional accommodation, left with no information if housed or not etc.)	23	16	2	6	na
Basis for calculation of housing retention	142	64	14	68	na
Positive outcome (still housed)	138 (97.2%)	60 (93.8%)	13 (92.9%)	54 (79.4%)	29 (< 50%)
<i>Still housed with support from HF programme</i>	122 (85.9%)	57 (89.1%)	13 (92.9%)	45 (66.2%)	0
<i>Housed without support from HF programme</i>	16 (11.3%)	3 (4.7%)	0	9 (13.8%)	29 (<50%)
Negative outcome (lost housing by imprisonment, eviction, "voluntary" leave into homelessness etc.)	4 (2.8%)	4 (6.3%)	1 (7.1%)	14 (20.6%)	na

Source: Local final reports, own calculations

Page 59 - Housing First Europe Final Report

Further Reading:

Housing First Europe Final Report (including recommendations made)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323143426_Housing_First_Europe_Final_Report

b. The New Leaf Project (Canada)

The New Leaf Project - Experimenting with direct cash transfers

The Project:

A social research program where direct cash transfers (roughly \$8000 AUD) were provided to people experiencing homelessness, with an aim of empowering them to catapult themselves out of homelessness.

A pilot project was launched to heavily scrutinise and evaluate the impact cash transfers had on recently homeless individuals. 115 participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups:

1. "cash-recipient" and
 2. "non-cash recipient" group
- Participants completed questionnaires at 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months and completed open-ended qualitative interviews after 6 and 12 months.
 - The average age of participants was 42 (range 19 to 64)
 - 60% men, 40% women
 - 1/3 had children
 - Participants had been homeless for an average of 6 months
 - 1 in 4 participants were employed

Eligibility: 19+ years of age

- Newly homeless (within 12 months) and living in a temporary shelter situation
- Canadian citizen or permanent resident
- Low risk of mental health challenges and substance abuse

Results:

To date, the preliminary data indicates that, on average, cash recipients:

- Move into stable housing faster
- Spend fewer days homeless

- Retain over \$1,000 in savings through 12 months
- Increase spending on food, clothing, and rent
- Achieve greater food security
- Made wise financial choices with a 39% reduction in spending on alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs
- Reduce reliance on the shelter system of care, resulting in cost savings to society

Foundations for Social Change: New Leaf Project (Taking Bold Action on Homelessness)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f07a92f21d34b403c788e05/t/5f751297fcfe7968a6a957a8/1601507995038/2020_09_30_FSC_Statement_of_Impact_w_Expansion.pdf

Foundations for Social Change

<https://forsocialchange.org/impact>

c. Homelessness Legislation (Wales)

Overview

An interesting outlook to consider is legislatively compelling a government to act on homelessness. The Welsh Government introduced a unique piece of legislation in 2015, in which a duty of care is placed on local authorities to prevent or alleviate homelessness for anyone that is seeking housing that has recently become homeless or is at risk. It was perceived to be pioneering legislation, with Wales being the first nation to introduce legislation around homelessness where the government was compelled to prevent homelessness. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is built upon the belief that everyone ought to have access to the help they need to secure a home.

Methodology

Upon seeking help, if an individual is threatened with homeless, they will enter the system at Stage 1 – ‘Help to Prevent’. Due to the legislation, the local authority has an obligation to help prevent that person from becoming homeless. There is a statutory guidance that articulates what the minimum requirement of intervention is that the local authority must engage in.

The duty of the local authority can only end in one of three ways:

1. Homelessness is prevented
2. The household becomes homeless
3. There is an ‘other’ reason (Generally either the offer has been refused or there is failure to cooperate)

A distinction from previous strategies, the Welsh statutory guidelines incorporate recipient responsibilities to run alongside the legislative right for the local authority to assist. This sees the household contributing to the development of their individualised housing plan and a need for cooperation moving forward.

If homelessness is unable to be prevented at Stage 1, or assistance has been applied for by an individual or household that is already experiencing homelessness, they will enter Stage 2 – ‘Help to Secure’. This is where the onus is on the local authorities to initiate action to help secure accommodation.

The duty will again end in three ways:

1. Homelessness is relieved (accommodation secure for a minimum of 6 months)
2. Homelessness is unsuccessfully relieved (no solution found within 56 days)
3. There is an 'other' reason (Offer refused or failure to cooperate)

If the steps at Stage 2 are unsuccessful, only then can households experiencing homelessness enter Stage 3 – 'Duty to Secure'. Stage 3 is not overly dissimilar to Stage 2, albeit an absolute duty on the local authority to secure accommodation for those deemed to be a priority.

The subsequent outcomes for Stage 3 are:

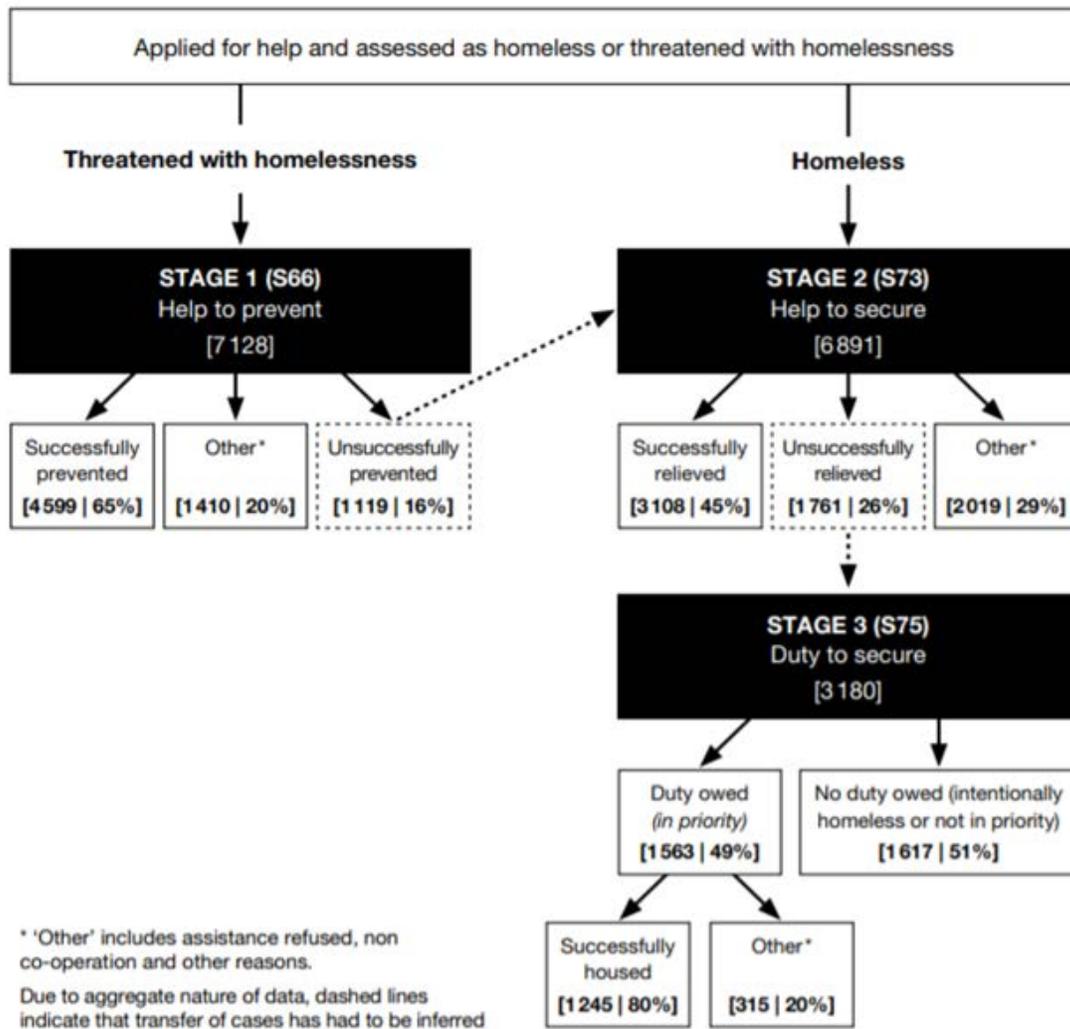
1. Household successfully accommodated
2. 'Other' reason (e.g. Offer refused)

Conclusion

Reflecting on the outcomes and implications of the Welsh legislation, four 'lessons for policymakers' were identified to assist other countries in their implementation of similar legislation:

- Having a legal duty on local authorities to initiate defined steps to prevent and relieve homelessness is an effective way to reorient services toward prevention.
- The coupling of rights with recipient responsibilities has induced concerns over the impacts it may have on vulnerable individuals. Policymakers ought to carefully consider this when deliberating over similar policies.
- The introduction of legislation alone is not enough. Close monitoring, regulation and resourcing of services has been deemed essential to success.
- The results shown from Wales suggests that a 'duty' to accommodate households has a strong chance of success in driving homelessness prevention and relief services.

Figure 2. Welsh Homelessness Legislation Process, Including Outcome Data for Stages One (Help to Prevent), Two (Help to Secure) and Three (Duty to Secure), 2015-16



Reflecting on a Year of Pioneering Welsh Legislation in Practice:

<https://www.feantsaresearch.org/download/article-4592410342917616893.pdf>

Afterthought: Areas of Opportunity

By providing a snapshot of the diversity of each project we are emphasizing the heterogeneous nature of the strategies being implemented globally. It is not feasible to implement a single strategy to overcome homelessness due to the complex needs of individuals and the intricacies of each jurisdiction they are in. For example, the New Leaf Project in Canada displays an effective approach for those that have recently become homeless, however for a target group of people that have been experiencing homelessness long-term an alternate strategy is likely more necessary.

We must continue to look internationally, drawing inspiration from other cities and countries across the globe to ensure we are at the forefront of innovation in homelessness solutions.

VI. Political advocacy and ways to get involved

At Mobilise we recognize that homelessness is a human rights issue and therefore we are pushing for participation in political advocacy at an individual and organisational level from our volunteers.

So, what is advocacy?

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions.

In our case, Mobilise's advocacy focuses on empowering those experiencing homeless to speak up about the current systems and services in place that are there to help them, critically evaluating their effectiveness and then advocating for changes at local, state, or federal level government.

As you can see from the research in this document, homelessness in Australia is a complex and wicked policy problem which has no "one size fits all" approach or solution. However, with information gathered directly by those experiencing homelessness and the data given to us by research conducted, we believe our team of volunteer youth can be equipped enough to ask for changes within our policies and government systems.

Getting involved in homelessness politically is our democratic right and it is our duty to acknowledge our privileged positions and uphold the voices of those we meet on our outreaches.

This section of the document aims to be a one stop shop for all thing's advocacy and help our volunteers feel motivated and equipped with the tools to start Mobilise's advocacy journey towards meaningful change for our neighbours sleeping rough.

How does political advocacy really work?

Many find the thought of political advocacy daunting or a waste of time, but it is neither! Substantial and meaningful changes to public policy almost always come from some form of advocacy, so how does it really work?

Firstly, political advocacy can be public or behind-the-scenes. The main goal is to be a bridge between policy makers and their constituents. Advocacy encompasses many kinds of activities designed to promote a cause or idea, and one of those activities is lobbying. Lobbying refers to specific activities intended to influence legislation or a specific legislator on an issue.

In Australia, our legislators are our Members of Parliament (MPs) who sit in the House of Representatives and our Senators, who sit in the Senate. There are currently 151 members of the House of Representatives, each representing one geographic area of Australia. Members are elected for a 3-year term and when in parliament, take part in debate on proposed laws and public policy, representing the views of the people in their electorate. A senator is a member of the Australian Senate, elected to represent a state or territory. There are 76 senators, 12 from each state and two each from the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

These individuals have all been democratically elected to represent each and every one of us in parliament.

This means that MPs and Senators:

- Are easily contactable, their emails and office phone numbers are publicly listed on the APH website for constituents to get in contact ([https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators and Members/Guidelines for Contacting Senators and Members](https://www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Guidelines_for_Contacting_Senators_and_Members)).
- Are interested in what their constituents see as important issues within their community and love meeting with them/hearing from them about these.
- Have a political duty to listen to mass calls to action and will be frowned upon if seen to ignore said calls.
- Are incredibly important players in meaningful political advocacy as they are decision makers on new policy.

Political advocacy in the form of lobbying (in a democratic country like Australia) is easy and if done correctly can be very effective.

An effective advocacy campaign requires small actions from a lot of people, rather than big actions from a few.

Emailing, calling, and setting up a meeting with your local MP or Senate representative is simple and we want to leave our volunteers feeling empowered to take individual action.

Here is some resources to get you started.

Below we have included an email template as a starting guide as to how your conversations might go.

In 2021 and beyond we plan on expanding our capacity to run call to action campaigns and champion significant change for those experiencing homelessness.

EMAIL TEMPLATE:

Subject: Request for a Meeting with Mobilise

Mr. XXXX XXX
Member for XXXX
Their office address
31st December 2020

Dear (MP or Senators name),

Request for a Meeting with Mobilise

I am writing to request an appointment to meet with you on XXXX to discuss non-partisan solutions to homelessness.

Mobilise is an ACNC registered non-profit organisation in Australia that focuses on uniting the youth of Australia to develop solutions for those experiencing homelessness. We run monthly outreaches across the Nation with our volunteers where we hand out care packages and have conversations with those experiencing homelessness and sleeping rough.

Our volunteers from all over Australia are looking to meet with many MPs and Senators from all parties, to discuss Mobilise's policy aims and the methods by which Mobilise can assist in encouraging the legislation of an effective homelessness policy response.

From our discussions with those experiencing homelessness during our outreaches and the research conducted into current policy and programs by our very own advocacy portfolio, we know our input into homelessness legislation will be welcomed.

We truly believe in a country as prosperous as Australia that no one should be sleeping on the street.

Feel free to add personal experiences of outreaches or invite the politician to an outreach

Consequently, we would really appreciate your feedback on the current state of homelessness policy in Australia in person, and look forward to meeting you sometime at your earliest convenience. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

(Your

Name),

Mobilise Volunteer (or exec position)

[Home address](#) (this is important if you live within their electorate)

Contact Number

VII. Where to find more information

Listed below are some fantastic resources to educate yourself on homelessness and explore particular areas of interest. We have relied on the hard work of others to compile this report, and we thank all the below sites and many others for this.

Excellent introductory websites

- *ABC Fact Check and RMIT University Social and Global Studies Centre*
(<https://www.abc.net.au/interactives/homeless/>)
- *AIHW Homelessness and homelessness services snapshot 2020*
(<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/homelessness-and-homelessness-services>)
- *Homelessness Australia fact sheets* (<https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/fact-sheets>)

Homelessness service index

- *Ask Izzy*
(<https://askizzy.org.au/>)

Quality research and submission sources

- *Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute*
(<https://www.ahuri.edu.au/>)
- *Mission Australia*
(<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications>)
- *Homelessness Australia* (<https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/news/reports-and-submissions>)
- *The Deck*
(<https://thedeck.org.au/research/>)
- *Australian Council of Social Services*
(<http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/>)
- *AIHW Homelessness* (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/homelessness-services/overview>)

Peak bodies

- National Shelter - peak body for tenants on low incomes, especially those living in public and community housing
(<https://shelter.org.au/national-shelter/>)
- Homelessness Australia - peak body preventing and Responding to Homelessness
(<https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/>)
- Community Housing Federation Australia - peak body of community housing providers
(<https://www.communityhousing.com.au/>)

Human Rights framework for homelessness

- *Homelessness is a Human Rights Issue 2008* (<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/homelessness-human-rights-issue-2008#main-navigation>)

Conclusion

The introduction of the NHHA in 2018 is a watershed moment for homelessness policy in Australia. Each state has now outlined their framework to address homelessness. Significant investment into social housing has begun and the demand for specialist homelessness services has been described and quantified.

However, this is not an issue that is going away with a few reports. Homelessness and rental stress are on the rise. They will require continued feedback, monitoring and innovation to address the changing face of homelessness in Australia.

It is an exciting and dynamic time in this space, and we at Mobilise encourage you to use the information in this inquiry (combined with the stories you share with people on the street) to inform your decision on how to get involved.

Together, we can end homelessness in Australia. While it exists, it is important that we work to build connection and community. Sit down with people and share in their stories. Get to know a face and a story to characterise the numbers and graphs you will find in these resources.

These are people, experiencing homelessness. It is up to all of us to ensure that when people are experiencing homelessness, they still feel like people - members of our community, society, and nation.

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